

THE STATE
Address OF THE CITY
ADDRESS
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER
FEBRUARY 24, 2003

DELIVERED BY

THE HONORABLE MAYOR
CARL B. HUTCHERSON, JR.

&
THE HONORABLE VICE MAYOR
BERTRAM F. DODSON, JR.



THE STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

FEBRUARY 24, 2003

Vice Mayor Dodson, my fellow members of City Council, City Manager Payne, Deputy City Manager Svrcek, honored guests, ladies and gentlemen, good evening.

Tonight, it is once again my privilege to address you concerning the State of our City. I am honored to share with you some of our accomplishments in 2002, as well as a few of the challenges that we face in 2003.

Before I continue, let me acknowledge and thank my esteemed colleagues on City Council. I thank them for their unwavering commitment, for their wisdom and for their willingness to give untold hours to focusing on the business of this community. My fellow citizens, join me in showing our gratitude to Councilmembers Seiffert, Barksdale, Dodson, Foster, Garber, and in his absence, Councilmember Adams.

I wish to also recognize our families because they have had to put up with hearing more about City business than they have ever wished to, they've endured our many meetings and late hours, and most importantly, they have been our unfailing support. Please join us in thanking them as well.

This evening Vice Mayor Dodson and I will honor seven individuals that we've chosen to receive the 2003 Mayor's Award of Excellence. These are fellow citizens that have made a rich and diverse contribution to this community while engaging in advocacy, community activism, education, and helping others. They are your friends and neighbors, and it is through their actions and the actions of so many others like them that Lynchburg is the strong, vital city that it is.

Ladies and Gentlemen, tonight we stand poised on the brink of war, and whether we believe it is the right action for our country to take or not, our thoughts can never be far away from those brave men and women who have answered the Nation's call to action. Some of you here in the audience or watching from home may know someone who has left their family behind to serve this country and I know your prayers are with them. We are honored to have with us tonight some of the family members of four of our own City employees who have answered the call. These four individuals are husbands, fathers, brothers, and children and they are valued members of this community. We owe a debt of gratitude to these citizen soldiers. Please join me in

welcoming the families and loved ones of Jason Stevens with Public Works,
Bryan Williams, Police, Michael B. Davis, Utilities,

Bryant Nowlin, Police and John Zeh also with our Police Department. Our prayers
go with you all and with your loved ones. May God bless.

Since the horrible events of September 11, 2001, we have been bombarded with
daily news accounts of possible terrorism threats. We've been introduced to a color-
coded alert system and instructed to prepare emergency kits. Although, thankfully,
Lynchburg has not been in the eye of the storm, we know that this heightened state of
alert has caused worry and frustration among our own citizens.

I want you to know that the City of Lynchburg has long had an Emergency
Operations Plan and we stand ready, as perhaps any city can be, to respond to
emergency situations. Our public safety officials are well-trained and our employees
are prepared should an emergency occur. In times of emergencies, it is vital for citizens
to be able to have confidence in those that serve them in public service. We understand
that in emergency situations, there is often fear of the unknown and feelings of
helplessness.

We also know that during these uncertain times it is critical that citizens are
confident they can obtain timely and accurate information. To meet these needs, should
the country move to Code Red, our customer service call center will begin 24-hour
operations, seven days a week, to provide citizens with a single point of contact. Many
of our employees have already volunteered to staff the center around the clock.

I want to encourage you to not let the news accounts, the rumors, and the
possibilities paralyze you. The goals of terrorist acts are to provoke fear and to change
the way people live their lives. Don't let that happen in this community. Be informed
but go about your normal lives doing those things that you do every day. To do less is
to allow those that would resort to terrorism win. And we are too determined a people
to let that happen.

This evening, in spite of our many challenges, I am able to say that the State of the
City is strong. We are strong and have faced the adversities that have come our way.
I am confident that together we will continue to do so and come out the better
despite them.

At this time last year, we were waiting to learn what impact the State's budget shortfall would have on us locally. Some things never change, because once again we find ourselves in the same fiscal predicament. In my 2002 State of the City address, I told you that Lynchburg could very well begin to see significant cuts in funding. Although I'd like to say that we knew this because the members of City Council are wise sages, it didn't take a crystal ball to make that prediction. Here we are one year later and I can tell you that over the biennium, this city will experience a two million-dollar reduction in state funding. These cuts represent reductions in funding to our regional airport, public safety, regional jail and social services; two million dollars in funding, that if received, still would not have fully funded the state's obligations to the City of Lynchburg.

The latest news from Richmond is disheartening as the State continues to balance the budget on the backs of cities that are already struggling to maintain services on the local level. Their unwillingness to adequately fund core services shifts a significant, undue burden to cities and to our citizens, who are least able to afford it. Their unwillingness, coupled with an outdated tax structure and a General Assembly that is reluctant to seriously address the real problem, means that a solution is not imminent. Our legislators, ladies and gentlemen, are not listening and we are quickly reaching our limit on how much we can fill the funding gap.

City employees have always been committed to delivering services in the most cost-efficient manner possible and they well understand the concept of doing more with less. I applaud our City Manager Kimball Payne for instituting a new program that encourages employees to identify cost-saving opportunities in the organization. This program, Seek Out Savings or S.O.S., has inspired employees to think twice about the services they deliver and encourages them to seek out ways to perform their jobs more efficiently. The ideas have been as simple as turning off lights when leaving offices to using technology to simplify processes.

I ask all of you to join me and the other members of Council in asking our local legislators to take a leadership role in the call for tax restructuring. They must do no further harm to localities in their quest to conduct business as usual.

In September 2002, our community experienced a rash of gang-related violence. Our police department was being taxed in its efforts to suppress this violence and it was of great concern to all of us. Many of you also voiced your concern and fear as gang-related violence began to spill out into the open, putting innocent bystanders in harm's way. In September of last year, I asked the administration to conduct a Summit on Safe Neighborhoods. The goal of the Summit was to give citizens the opportunity to identify the causes of the violence, to hear your concerns and to ask you to become an active part of the solutions.

I can't tell you how I felt when hundreds of you convened at E. C. Glass High School to have a conversation about your community. You came together from every neighborhood in this City and in your diversity you found common interests and common concerns. Many of you also told us that you were willing to join us in reclaiming our neighborhoods.

Since that night, many things have happened. Those in the criminal justice community including the police department, the commonwealth attorney's office, the magistrate's office, the regional jail and others, have come together in the spirit of collaboration in way that they have never enjoyed before. They are now meeting together on a regular basis and sharing vital information with each other. I applaud their willingness to open up those lines of communication. Earlier this year, City Council appropriated almost \$30,000 to purchase software that will allow this group to use technology in its information-sharing efforts. This will increase the level of efficiency in their collective efforts to make this community safer.

When we began the Safe Neighborhoods initiative, it was soon evident we needed someone to champion this effort. That champion was found already working for the City in the Department of Parks and Recreation. Last year the City Manager named him his special assistant on Safe Neighborhoods and he has hit the ground running. He has a passion for young people and for the well being of this community. He is with us tonight. Ladies and gentlemen, Albert Jennings.

Last week we convened the first meeting of the Safe Neighborhoods Steering Committee and I was pleased to see the high level of energy that still persists among those who were asked to serve on the committee. Some of them are with us tonight and I welcome them.

To date, over two-thirds of the individuals that have been identified as gang members are in jail and we thank our police department for doing such an excellent job. Tonight you have my pledge that we will work to ensure that all our neighborhoods are safe places to live. Sometimes we tend to focus on the negative but you should know that Lynchburg has the lowest crime rate among the seven Metropolitan Statistical Areas in the entire Commonwealth and the 15th lowest in the United States. The message is loud and clear, we will not tolerate those that would endeavor to destroy our community through violence and illegal activity.

Government does not have all the solutions nor should we expect it to. The answers are out there in the neighborhoods, in the schools, in the homes, and yes, even on the street corners. Parents must accept responsibility for their children and provide a stable home environment for them. All of our community partners, schools, churches, and other organizations must ensure that our young people, regardless of socio-economic backgrounds have access to the opportunities they need in order to succeed. I ask our school administration to search for alternatives to 365-day suspensions that enables troubled young people to find more opportunities to be non-productive. To the business community, I encourage you to start job shadowing and mentoring programs.

To you that have joined us tonight I issue you a challenge, become a big brother or sister, volunteer to be a lunch buddy, teach a young person a new skill or help them discover some hidden talent. Let our children know that there are worlds out there to discover that have nothing to do with gangs. Nike says, "Just do it!" and I'm going to steal their slogan and say to you all, "Just do it!"

It has been a pleasure to serve on City Council with your next speaker. I am proud to call him a colleague and a friend. Ladies and gentlemen, the Vice Mayor, Bert Dodson.



Thank you for allowing me a few minutes to talk about our city's progress in achieving quite a few quality of life improvements in the recent past.

These improvements to downtown, to our schools and to our city facilities, have been undertaken because the time has come. The time has come for Lynchburg to move forward in spite of financial constraints – and we have moved forward in partnership

with the private and non-profit sectors without raising real estate taxes, and without great stress and interruption in the daily lives of our citizens.

The time has come for us to move forward with a vision of the future encompassed in our Comprehensive Plan, which serves as a road map and as a long-term guide to what our city will be like in the coming years. Our Plan was achieved through citizen participation and input, and I want to thank Judy Weigand, our strategic planner, for her leadership. And also, I want to thank all the citizens that were willing to attend meetings and supply input into the City's plan. It is an exciting Plan of realistic possibilities and optimistic dreams.

Our city has been recently described as "an over-achiever" in regard to our participation in the Virginia Main Street Program, and of the two awards Lynchburg recently received, one award was for passing the 10 million dollar milestone in private revitalization investment in downtown. Private sector investment in Lynchburg's downtown revitalization is becoming a reality because we have charted a course for the development of downtown, and we are moving forward in other ways to improve the quality of life in our city.

Just look at what has been accomplished in our city in the recent past:

We now have a brand new General Aviation Terminal at Lynchburg Regional Airport, that is the first impression business visitors who travel by private airplanes will see when they come to Lynchburg. It makes a great showcase for our city, and the new terminal is a very positive and modern step forward.

During the month of May we are looking forward to the re-dedication of the 100 year old and beautifully renovated J.W. Ould building on the corner of 9th and Commerce Streets as the new home for the City's Department of Human Services in which 165 people will work in the heart of downtown Lynchburg everyday. This is more than an economic development catalyst—it is practical in that it will save the city money over time, and is more accessible to the citizens that are served by our committed and talented human services personnel.

Currently ongoing is a 5 million-dollar renovation of our baseball stadium, and once the project is completed our City will have a baseball stadium that will be the envy of other cities. Your Council worked hard to make this dream a reality and

Councilmembers Seiffert and Garber were instrumental in making this project a success. Also ongoing is the creation of a multi-field soccer complex on Route 501 South, a facility long awaited by soccer players and parents alike.

Coming soon is a new Federal Courthouse and Post Office complex on 12th and Court Streets, as well as public space improvements, which are part of the Downtown/Riverfront Master Plan.

Of course we cannot overlook the celebration we enjoyed last April when we officially recognized the reopening of our historic Kemper Street Train Station. This was a special day and a great leap forward for our City and every citizen in Lynchburg can be proud of this facility.

The City school system has recently completed 10 million dollars in renovations to Linkhorne Middle School, and will soon begin long awaited renovations and additions to E.C. Glass High School. We are committed to the improvement of our schools, and better learning environments for our children.

In addition, there is progress on planning for a spectacular river fountain for downtown, as well as progress on development of the Riverviews Artspace. The Academy of Music and Fine Arts Center have begun meeting about a possible merger that will lead to a greater enhancement of the cultural possibilities of our city. Your City Council is committed to the success of this venture. Finally, we are seeing ongoing improvements to 9th Street and Jefferson Street, as well as the development of Riverfront Park.

Our local newspaper has been filled with stories about the advancements Lynchburg has been making recently and there are more stories to come in the future. Compared to the pace of improvements in the last 30 years, Lynchburg has, indeed, been an over-achiever lately, and the phrase “over-achiever” is meant in the best possible way. The kind of growth and improvements we are seeing is exciting and most impressive, contributing to our quality of life and our economic vitality in ways unimaginable in years gone by. These accomplishments are cause for a celebration of success, and are shared by the private sector, the non-profit sector, and the public sector in partnership for progress in Lynchburg. It is a shared vision of responsible growth and aesthetic quality that will lead to a better and more functional city for all our citizens.

Last week, our Financial Services Director Michael Hill announced the successful sale of the City's general obligation bonds. The City received an excellent interest rate and because of that rate, we will realize savings of approximately 1.7 million dollars over the next two years. The revenue generated from the sale of the bonds will be used to fund capital projects in the City, including many of the ones just mentioned.

When the bond rating agencies confirmed the City's AA rating recently, one of them, Standard and Poor's, wrote that Lynchburg had a diverse and stable local economy; that it serves as a regional employment base and retail center; a good financial operation coupled with well-defined policies and good planning practices; and a moderate debt burden with a manageable capital plan.

We want to maintain that AA rating but, there are, however, challenges that remain in maintaining the economic health of the city, and the City's ability to achieve positive goals and provide important and critical services. As the Mayor has said these challenges have yet to be addressed in the ongoing debate about the relationship of our state government to our local governments. There are imbalances in our state tax structure that are not helpful to cities in Virginia, and long term solutions must be found at the state level.

I can't emphasize the Mayor's words enough that it is important for citizens to communicate with their elected representatives in Virginia's government, to help them reflect on the need for a better balance in the state's obligations to local government so we can continue to advance and move forward into the 21st century.

In conclusion, Lynchburg has made a number of strides forward, and I know your City Council will continue to work together with the citizens of our community to achieve a better Lynchburg, both for today and for tomorrow.



Thank you Bert. I want to end tonight by talking with you about community. Those of us who call Lynchburg home are truly blessed. We have our share of problems, every community does, and we have talked about some of them tonight. But we are much greater than the sum of those problems. We are a community of people and when challenged we have risen to the occasion time and time again.

As I mentioned earlier, we are honoring seven of our fellow citizens tonight. They are being honored because of their love for this community and for their willingness to put that love into action. They have led efforts to ensure that children have a safe haven, others have given their manual labor building homes, still others have found ways to fill the gap in school funding so teachers have the tools they need to teach our children. Some have mobilized neighborhoods, walked the streets picking up litter and loaned their talents and expertise to boards and committees. Some have used their efforts to restore and others have taken their activism beyond the shores of this country. All seven share a love of people, a spirit of community, and a desire to improve the human condition. They are:

Dr. James Taylor, Ms. Delia Hooks,

Mr. Stuart Fauber, Mr. Ron Dolan, Ms. Becky Porter,

Ms. Laura Munson and Mr. Tom Gerdy.

I've spoken quite a bit about volunteering. I do so because without a sense of caring, there can be no sense of community, and a community is only as good as the people that live in it. As your Mayor, it has been my pleasure to meet people from so many different backgrounds and with as many different stories.

I've seen our own City employees, some of whom are experiencing their own financial difficulties, show their love of community by surpassing the City's 2002 United Way campaign goal. I've known a bus driver that went out of his way to seek medical assistance for a passenger and then return to make sure the passenger had a way home. That bus driver is with us tonight – welcome Steven Kourkoulakos.

There are police officers, firefighters and maintenance workers that have pushed aside thoughts of their own safety and rushed into burning apartments to save a victim and Public Works employees that ran to vehicle accidents to provide assistance.

This City is about community and it has been my joy to serve in my small way. Every single one of us has something to contribute to the good of this community. I believe that God has endowed each of us with something that we can give back. I ask that you find some way to become a part of the larger community. Serve on one of City Council's boards or commissions, become a volunteer with a senior citizen

program, pick up litter or get involved in a restoration project. The opportunities to give back are endless.

We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community... Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own.

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for listening tonight. 2002 was a good year. Join us in making 2003 a banner year. Your community depends upon it. God bless this city and God bless each of you.

2003 MAYOR'S AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

Mr. Ronald Dolan

Mr. Stuart C. Fauber

Mr. Thomas J. Gerdy

Ms. Delia Hooks

Ms. Laura Munson

Ms. Becky Porter

Dr. James H. Taylor

FORMER RECIPIENTS OF THE MAYOR'S AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

February 22, 1999

Rev. Nathan C. Brooks, III

Charles F. Church

Dr. Peter W. Houck

Rev. Ronald A. Gills, Sr.

Rev. Haywood Robinson, Jr.

Jane White

February 28, 2000

Yvonne T. Ferguson

Rev. Herb Moore

Elliott Schewel

Calvin Falwell

Chauncey Spencer

February 26, 2001

Dr. Jerry L. Falwell

Mr. Rodger W. Fauber

Ms. Josephine (Jiggie) Holt

Ms. Gail B. Jackson

Dr. William F. Quillian, Ph.D.

Mrs. Irma W. Seiferth

Mr. Harry Smith, Jr.

FORMER RECIPIENTS OF THE MAYOR'S AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

February 25, 2002

Ms. Mary B. Adams

Mr. Edwin R. Page

Ms. Mary H. Payne

Mr. Marc A. Schewel

Mr. Lawrence W. Simpson, Jr.

Mr. J.F. Taylor, Jr.

Ms. Anne R. Wesley

Mr. Bev Cosby
(Posthumously)